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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to answer the following research questions: (1) to what extent is there consensus in the organizational culture on basic rules for an effective performance; (2) to what extent are there variations in rule consensus for an effective performance appraisal interview among groups within the organization; and (3) to what extent do the elicited rules reflect the experiences of the organization? A field descriptive study uncovered the participants' formal and informal rules that guided their behaviors in the context of their organization. Four hypothetical scenarios were constructed using the rules as structural guidelines. Scenarios were designed to elicit naturally occurring reactions on the subsequent set of 16 scalar items and various demographic questions. This two-step procedure facilitated inclusion of the "actors'" meanings into the research materials. Results solidly validated this method of gathering information about a particular organizational culture and the relative rule knowledge of the members in the context of that culture. The clerical employees and their managers agreed on several fundamental rules for the appraisal interview. The most potentially harmful disagreement between the two groups was the difference in the stated purpose of the appraisal session. The clerical employees saw the session as a chance to get performance feedback; the supervisors enlarged the purpose of the session to include mutual goal setting through employee participation. (Two tables of data are included and 23 references are attached. Appendixes list interview protocol, interview scenarios and questions, Survey Scalar Items, Survey Demographic Items, and ANOVA Results.) (MG)

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The Characteristics of an Effective Performance Appraisal Interview: A Rules Approach

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Introduction

Performance appraisals are an organizational fact of life. Locher and Teel (1977) reported over 90% of those companies surveyed use some system of performance appraisal for some or all factions of their work force. Of the remainder, more organizations were implementing some form of performance appraisal system daily (Campbell & Barron, 1982).

Eichel and Bender (1984) found that, regardless of the technique used to rate performance, an appraisal interview was the feedback vehicle used by 99% of the management personnel surveyed. In 93% of these appraisal interview situations, the appraisee meets with the primary appraiser, most commonly his or her immediate supervisor. The importance of this discussion has been documented by Mount (1983) who found that the quality of the appraisal discussion, as judged by the employee, to be a key aspect in predicting overall satisfaction with the company appraisal system.

However, the enactment of the discussion has been less than exemplary. Meyer, Kay, and French (1965) reported that the average subordinate reacted defensively to 60% of the boss' suggestions for improving performance. Moreover, Stewart (1965) found that 33 out of 50 subordinates had negative reactions to the appraisal interview based on the way the supervisor conducted it. Thus, when performed poorly, the performance appraisal interview can just as easily be a source of dissatisfaction as it can be a source of necessary feedback.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature showed reliance on classic contributions as well as new perspectives. Articles spanned a range from lists of suggestions by experts in the field to case studies to highly controlled laboratory experiments. However, while the range of articles has been broad, the scope of the literature has been limited. Kikoski and Litterer (1983), after a review of 351 recent performance appraisal-related journal articles, found only a limited number which focused on the interview. Those that did fell into two categories; either a broad advice-laden article or book written by an expert in the field or a narrow empirical look at one appraisal interview characteristic and its effect on one or more outcome variables.

Bernardin and Beatty (1984) have also pointed out that research of an empirical nature has been limited. Rather, researchers have proposed suggestions for making the performance review constructive. Most of these suggestions take the form of specific interpersonal skills or strategies which any manager can use in any organization to improve the interview (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Johnson, 1979; Meyer, 1977; Mahler, 1976). They are not context-specific. These suggestions have failed to recognize that the most important determinants of the situation are not what the manager says but how he/she goes about conducting the interview or setting up a productive context for the interview.

The Interview as a Communication Episode

Communication is a form of human activity where persons collectively create and manage social reality in the context of an episode (Pearce & Cronen, 1980).

Pearce, Cronen and Conklin (1980) argue that communication occurs on multiple levels simultaneously, and that meanings are reflexively built between these levels. An interpersonal encounter, such as a performance appraisal interview, must be viewed as a sequential enactment of appropriate acts within a given context. The process is akin to a negotiation process between the two individuals.

Since the interview is a transactional communication episode, it must be examined holistically, as collective social reality. Many variables interact within the context of the performance appraisal interview to create a product, a communicative effort, which may not possess the additive qualities of the original variables. Therefore, a macroscopic analysis, which seeks to describe the properties of the product of the interaction, is appropriate. One macroscopic approach that has shown promise is a rules approach.

The communication rules approach has been advanced as a framework for understanding human communicative interactions. A rules perspective differs from a traditional laws approach because it does not assume that the same explanatory structure can be applied to all phenomena (Pearce, 1976). Rather, it recognizes that the logic underlying patterned and meaningful behavior sequences may be normative, but, more importantly, may also be idiosyncratic. From a rules perspective, an actor possesses a sense of knowingness for the rules of each situation. These rules to do not specify particular consequents which are casually determined by the presence of certain antecedent actions or conditions. Rather, the actor is aware of a variety of optional behaviors from which he/she can choose. Consistent with this perspective,

Pearce and Wiseman (1983) define rule "intrapersonally as descriptions of the way particular persons interpret their world and decide how to act" (p. 80).

Justification for a Rules Approach

A rules approach is appropriate for the study of communication situations. This approach allows the researcher to incorporate the actor's meanings into the research process. Further, with a rules approach, several interacting levels of the situation can be viewed simultaneously. One way that a rules approach allows for multiple perspectives is through an interpretive approach to variable definition.

Within this perspective, the practitioners are asked to define the phenomena within their knowledge of the system. Each individual's knowledge is derived through an internalization of his/her unique experiences with a particular organizational culture. These experiences, relevant to the performance appraisal interview, may include formal regulations which are distributed by the organization, daily interactions with peers and supervisors, and previous appraisal interviews.

Therefore, an internal definition of an effective as well as ineffective performance appraisal interview exists for each individual in the context of each organization. This internal definition may not be shared by any other organization. Consequently, researcher-derived definitions which attempt to increase the generalizability of findings may not correspond to any particular organization's definition of an effective feedback interview.

Furthermore, particular groups within the same organization may not share the same definition. An interpretive approach to variable definition can recognize

differences between groups within a single organization. One such distinction which has been reported in the literature is between managers and subordinates. Ilgen, Peterson, Martin, and Boeschen (1981) found evidence of two different perspectives when they reported only moderate agreement between supervisors and subordinates regarding the objective qualities of a performance appraisal interview session. An interpretive approach will allow the researcher to identify and compare any definitional differences.

The Research Problem

This paper will report on a study which utilized a communication rules approach to probe the following research questions:

RQ_1: To what extent is there consensus in the organizational culture on basic rules for an effective performance appraisal interview?

RQ_2: To what extent are there variations in rule consensus for an effective performance appraisal interview among groups within the organization.

RQ_3: To what extent do the elicited rules reflect the experiences of the organization?

Methodology

The methodology approximated procedures introduced by Harris and Cronen (1979) and refined by Laird (1982) and Barge (1985). First, a field descriptive study uncovered the participants' formal and informal rules which guided their behaviors in the context of their organization. Second, four hypothetical scenarios were constructed using the rules as structural guidelines. The scenarios were designed to elicit naturally-occurring reactions on the subsequent set of 16 scaler items and various

demographic questions. This two-step procedure facilitated inclusion of the actors' meanings into the research materials.

Step One: The Interviews

Interview sample

The Personnel Office notified all university clerical employees and their supervisors of the details of the project through an organization-wide letter. A random sample of clerical employees was selected from a complete listing of the population (n = 286). From this list, nine clerical employees and their supervisors agreed to be interviewed. The final sample list was cross-checked to determine if the sample was representative of the population. The final sample included a representative from each level of clerical job classification, from administrative departments as well as academic, and from various age, experience levels, and administrative divisions on campus.

Interview Protocol. Interview questions were designed to elicit descriptive rules which acted to guide the employee when choosing what behaviors were appropriate in an effective appraisal interview and those that were more prevalent in an ineffective performance appraisal interview at this university. Subjects were asked to think about a past performance review which they considered effective and one which they considered ineffective. No external definition of effective/ineffective was provided. Instead, the subjects were encouraged to share their understandings of those concepts as reflected in behaviors in this organization. Then they were requested to specify the following details about each type of review: (a) the situation or context surrounding the review, (b) the communication behaviors and utterances of both the employee and the

supervisor which were viewed as effective/ineffective, and (c) the behaviors which were allowed or prohibited in the effective/ineffective performance review discussion. A complete interview protocol appears in Appendix A. In a pilot test, two clerical employees and two supervisors responded to the final list of questions and probes. All four felt the questions were clear and appropriate.

Interview procedure. Subjects were interviewed in the building which houses the Department of Personnel Services. The interview room was a standard office space, isolated from the main work area of the Department of Personnel and, also from each employee's normal workplace. The two members of each dyad were interviewed separately to encourage openness. Each interview lasted from one to one and one-half hours. An audio tape player recorded each interview.

Interview data analysis. After completing the interviews, the researcher reviewed the taped interviews, and noted key phrases, quotations, and communicative behaviors which represented the components of an effective and ineffective appraisal interview. Each unique behavior was noted. A tally mark represented each subsequent mention of the same behavior. A separate list for supervisors and employees was compiled. Then, these lists were examined for overarching rules mentioned by both supervisors and employees. For example, if a majority of both groups identified a particular action as an effective behavior, that behavior was identified as a rule on which consensus existed. On the other hand, those understandings that were mentioned by only one of the two groups, either supervisors or employees, were designated as rules which were met with dissensus.

Step Two: The Survey

Scenario construction. The second phase of this study used the information from the interviews to construct a questionnaire. The stimulus materials consisted of four hypothetical scenarios which represented each set of rules through an appraisal dialogue between a supervisor and a subordinate. The form of the dialogues followed Pearce and Cronen's (1980) definition of an episode. Each episode represented the components of one of the four lists identified previously. (See Appendix B for copies of the episodes.)

Scenario content. Episode One was an interaction which presented the consensual rules for an ineffective interview. The scenario showed a supervisor and a subordinate who were both dreading the thought of a performance review discussion. The manager had devoted little time or effort to completing the appraisal form, and had written no comments to accompany the array of "satisfactory" marks. The supervisor did not see the need to discuss the appraisal. The subordinate, even though he/she was dissatisfied with the appraisal, made no attempt to initiate discussion about the assessment.

Episode Two was an interaction where both parties employee behavior rules which were considered ineffective by either the supervisors or the employees, but not both. In this episode, the manager wanted to discuss several performance deficiencies with the subordinate. The subordinate displayed an immediate defensive position. The supervisor discussed the problems with the employee by citing information from a third source and pointed to a problem in the subordinate's personal life that he/she felt

may have been interfering with the workplace. The subordinate continued to defend his/her actions throughout the interview.

Episode Three showed an effective interview where the rules were met with consensus from both groups. The manager began the discussion with specific recognition and praise for excellence on the job. Constructive criticisms were also shared with the subordinate. In a problem solving attempt, the manager solicited suggestions from the subordinate. The subordinate offered suggestions and explained his/her point of view without being defensive. The supervisor ended the discussion by indicating possible career advancements for the employee.

Episode Four depicted rules for an effective interview which were not mentioned by both supervisor and employee sample groups. The scenario began with the supervisor sharing the employee's strengths and weaknesses, explaining the ratings, soliciting suggestions for improvements, and discussing advancement possibilities. Then, the supervisor and subordinate negotiated several specific goals for improvement. The session ended with the supervisor asking for feedback about his/her responsiveness as a supervisor. The subordinate shared one suggestion for improvement with the supervisor.

All four episodes incorporated androgynous names for both employees. The episodes were read by a clerical employee and a supervisor from the Personnel Services Department before distribution. They felt the episodes were realistic.

Survey scaler items. Sixteen five-point Likert-type verbally anchored scales which ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" followed each episode. The

episodes and scaler items were followed by a one-page demographic questionnaire including questions on sex, age, years of tenure at UNI, years of tenure in present department, type of participation in past performance reviews (indicating position), and number of past performance review discussions. (See Appendix C for scaler measurement items and demographic questions.)

A correlational analysis of the two items measuring years of service to the university and years of service to the department yielded a significant .88 Pearson r ($p < .000$). Therefore, only one item, years of employee at UNI was used in future analysis. A second correlational analysis of gender and position demonstrated a significant Pearson r value of .71 ($p < .000$). In fact, the sample group of subordinates contained no male members. Therefore, any unique variance associated with gender was judged to be confounded by position. As a result, no gender subgroup variances were analyzed.

Survey sample. A second random sample of clerical workers, independent of the first, was drawn. The researcher contacted the subjects by telephone and solicited their cooperation with the project. When 30 employees had verbally agreed to participate and the Personnel Office had provided the names of their supervisors, the sample was complete. Thus, the total N for phase two was 60.

Survey Procedures. The researcher personally explained the nature of the project to each subject in a short meeting at the subject's workplace. The subjects were handed the packet of materials and asked to return them in the enclosed, pre-addressed envelope via campus mail (a free university service) within ten days. Fifty-

four subjects, an equal number of supervisors and subordinates, returned the packets giving an excellent return rate of 90%.

Data analysis. Statistical analyses was undertaken using the SPSSX computer program. Analyses included: (a) frequencies, (b) Friedman two-way analysis of variance, (c) Chi Square goodness of fit tests to detect nonrandom variance among respondent subgroups.

Results

Interviews with organizational members produced a two by two matrix of rules. One feature varied according to level of agreement, concensus or dissensus. The second feature was characterized by level of interview effectiveness, ineffective or effective. The resulting four cells were described by four lists of rules, ineffective consensus, ineffective dissensus, effective consensus, and effective dissensus.

Overview of General Trends

Overall, the analysis found clerical personnel and their supervisors agreed on several rules which defined the effective as well as the ineffective performance appraisal discussion. In addition, several understandings were held by one group but not the other. Three underlying characteristics of the rules were observed.

First, both quantitative and qualitative evidence pointed toward the conclusion that the rules for both an ineffective and an effective performance appraisal interview resided primarily in the manager's behavior. A frequency count revealed that both employees and managers alike mentioned far more defining behaviors for their managers than for their peers. In addition, the managers' suggestions for other

managers outnumbered the quantity of suggestions for managers which were given by the employees.

In a qualitative vein, both supervisors and employees mentioned the foundational importance of selected managerial attitudes or behaviors that must exist or take place before the interview can be successful. Though both groups recognized the contribution of the employee, his or her effect seemed to be secondary. For example, one of the ineffective employee behaviors mentioned was giving excuses for weaknesses. This behavior could not be seen unless the manager had previously asked the employee for some sort of input into the discussion.

Second, the comments represent an emphasis on how rather than what. Particular words do not seem to be of primary importance. The way they are said and how the overall process is carried out was paramount. The results emphasized the point that the specific actions themselves do not bring about negative or positive outcomes but, rather, that the specifics are invariably given meanings which "tag" them as negative or positive aspects of the experience. For example, the supervisory action of not filling out the form very completely was a negative comment because it was linked with a disregard for the importance of the form and thus, the overall process of appraisal feedback.

Third, the rules emphasized the context of the interview. THe participants mentioned the importance of the nature of the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate. They also noted that appraisal interaction should be a continual process, rather than the product of a once a year meeting. Therefore, the main difference

between this episode and the numerous other episodes that occur daily between a supervisor and a subordinate may be the level of structure, a quantitative difference, not a qualitative difference.

The Effective Performance Appraisal Interview

Consensus rules. Primarily, the effective performance appraisal interview is one that takes place. Since a discussion following the performance evaluation was not required at the university, the decision to have or not to have an interview or not was made by the manager. In most cases, both supervisors and subordinates agreed that there should be a discussion.

Both groups also indicated that some preparation or positive context was necessary for the interview to be effective. The respondents saw the success of the interview as contingent, in large part, on the nature of the ongoing relationship the supervisor and the subordinate had established. To the extent that this relationship was a positive one, the interview could be an effective one. Beyond this basic context, both groups also mentioned more instrumental preparation in the form of diary keeping or conscientiously filling out the form.

The remainder of the consensus rules for the effective interview, concerned the way the manager handles the discussion. Here, the basic rule was to treat the employee humanely. Criticism should be tempered with at least an equal amount of praise and should be given constructively. The managers and clerical employees said managers should show concern for, seek cooperation with, and solicit input from subordinates.

Subgroup differences. The areas of dissensus for the effective interview came solely from the managers. Beyond the basic agreement between supervisors and clerical employees, the managers gave more rules that the subordinates did not mention.

An important different between managers and subordinates focused on the underlying purpose of the performance appraisal discussion. Clerical employees wanted to get performance feedback from their bosses. They indicated they want praise, constructive criticism, and explanations of lower ratings. Their comments rarely mentioned cooperation or participation in the process. Their beliefs coincided most closely to the traditional "Tell and Sell" method (Meyer, 1968). On the other hand, managers saw performance feedback as one of the purposes of the appraisal discussion. However, they wanted to go beyond an oral review of the performance feedback contained on the appraisal form. The managers consistently mentioned employee participation through joint goal setting and personal goal definition.

A second area of dissensus showed up when the managers stated that employees should give feedback relevant to their boss' performance. Notably, though, these comments were generally linked to the manager's solicitation of employee input.

The Ineffective Performance Appraisal Interview

Consensus rules. As with the effective interview, the manager held the larger degree of responsibility for the outcome. In fact, neither group mentioned an employee-initiated behavior that would be considered ineffective.

The list of rules for an ineffective appraisal interview can be summarized into one which represents both groups: When the participants have a negative attitude about the process, the outcome will likely be negative. Several of the other rules such as filling out the form responsibly and preparing for the interview, can be seen as consequences of a prevailing negative attitude.

Subgroup differences. Managers and clerical employees disagreed about several components of the ineffective interview. First, the employees wanted feedback regardless of what their performance levels were. On the other hand, some of the managers felt that a discussion did not need to take place if the employee's performance had been satisfactory. Second, the employees did not feel the supervisors should include information from other sources in the discussion. Third, the employees believed that comments about their personal life had no place in the appraisal discussion. The managers did not mention this restriction.

Survey Results

Validity

The survey questions attempted to assess the validity of the scenarios. The question of validity has three aspects. First, did the episodes represent realistic scenarios between a supervisor and a clerical employee which could actually take place at this university? Second, are the episodes conceptually distinct so that they are producing different responses across questions and within groups? Third, are the participants and the episodes being perceived as they were intended, either as competent/incompetent or as effective/ineffective.

Realism of the episodes. The first validation question dealt with whether or not episodes such as these might occur at UNI. Overall, the respondents overwhelmingly felt that these episodes represented valid scenarios in the context of their cultural understandings of this organization. Across the four episodes, an average of 80% disagreed or strongly disagreed (with "1" corresponding to strongly agree and "5" representing strongly disagree) with the question, "This episode would never happen at this university."

As shown in Table 1, the small differences in the means and mean ranks across episodes for the realism question resulted in an insignificant differences between episodes on this question. Thus, no single episode was judged as more realistic than any other one. This finding strengthened the assertion that the subjects believed that all of the episodes, serving as further validation of the integrity of the episodes.

Table 1

"This episode would never happen at this university."

Episode	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	Chi Sq	df	Sig
1 -- IC[a]	4.11	.793	2.57	1.83.	3	.609
2 -- ID[b]	3.93	.821	2.29			
3 -- EC[c]	3.98	.981	2.57			
4 -- ED[d]	3.98	.951	2.58			

[a] Episode 1 is Ineffective Consensus (IC).
[b] Episode 2 is Ineffective Dissensus (ID).
[c] Episode 3 is Effective Consensus (EC).
[d] Episode 4 is Effective Dissensus (ED).

Subgroup differences. One significant subgroup difference was noted between supervisors and subordinates. In Episode 1, IC, supervisors were significantly more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, "This episode would never happen at this university" (Chi Square = 8.65; p = .034). That is, supervisors thought the episode would be more likely to happen at UNI than subordinates did. The episode described a perfunctory interview where the supervisor sought only a signature from the subordinate. These quantitative results mirrored the interview results which suggested that supervisors felt a discussion did not need to take place if the performance level of the subordinate was satisfactory. Thus, some of the supervisors may have viewed this episode as an example of such a case.

Differences across episodes. A second validity check was made to ensure that subjects perceived the intended differences in the four episodes. Each of the 16 scalar items was analyzed for differences across episodes. The responses were analyzed using a Friedman two-way analysis of variance by ranks. Fourteen of the 16 questions showed significant differences ($p < .05$).

Two questions showed no significant differences in responses across episodes. They were: "I could predict with great certainty that Chris's actions would get the response they did." and "This episode would never happen at this university."

The first non-significant difference concerned the subjects' ability to predict responses. The similarities in the answers to these questions indicated that the different types of episodes did not affect the subjects' ability to predict the next logical act. The subjects' responses demonstrate that these episodes are enough analogous

to familiar organization episodes that they are predictable by those who were enmeshed into the rules system of this particular organizational culture.

The judgment of realism was the other question that showed no significant difference across episode. These results have been reviewed previously.

The remainder of the answers were found to be significantly different across episodes. Therefore, the episodes were shown to be conceptually distinct and the responses to the questions can be viewed as context-dependent. These results lend support to the claim that the stimulus material is valid. Results of the Friedman tests are summarized in Appendix D.

Evaluation of the actors. This analysis relied on answers to the judgments of the competence levels of the individuals in the scenario, effectiveness of the individuals in the scenario, and the evaluations of the overall effectiveness of the episode. If the evaluations varied in the expected direction, the scenario can be seen as valid rule enactments based on the lists derived from the interview component of the study.

Three questions are relevant to this evaluation: 1.) I think Pat/Chris communicated in a very competent manner in this episode. 2.) I think Pat's/Chris's actions would be considered effective by his/her supervisors. 3.) This is a highly effective interchange between Pat and Chris. The answers were analyzed to determine whether the evaluative ratings given to the participants whether the evaluative ratings given to the participants were consistent with the effective/ineffective rules that respondents had related during the interviews. The results of these

questions are summarized in Table 2. Responses are on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

As the table shows, the subjects' responses corresponded with researcher expectations. Episodes 1 and 2, designed to be ineffective, were consistently rated as ineffective, showing disagreement or strong disagreement when asked if the participants communicated competently and if the episode was effective. Except for the evaluations of Pat (the supervisor) in Episode 2, over 90% of the sample either disagreed or strongly disagreed with all three questions. The two lower scores occur in Episode 2 which depicts rules on which there was dissensus. So, naturally, the means of this episode will be slightly less polarized and thus, slightly lower than the episode characterized by consensus.

Evaluations of Episodes 3 and 4 produced consistently low means, below 2.0. These episodes were patterned after rules for an effective episode. Thus, the expected response to the judgments of competence and effectiveness would be "agree" or "strongly agree." This was the case in all the questions noted above for over 90% of the sample in the consensus episode (Episode 3) and for over 80% in the dissensus episode (Episode 4). As expected, the means for Episode 4 were slightly higher, showing the likely dissensus that this episode evoked.

Table 2

Competence Levels of the Actors

Question	Episode	Mean

Pat (supervisor) communicated competently.	1 - IC 4.69
Chris (subordinate) communicated competently.	1 - IC 4.20
Pat's actions considered effective by supervisor.	1 - IC 4.50
Chris' actions considered effective by supervisor.	1 - IC 4.07
Episode is effective.	1 - IC 4.82
Pat communicated competently.	2 - ID 3.17
Chris communicated competently.	2 - ID 4.20
Pat's actions considered effective by supervisor.	2 - ID 3.22
Chris' actions considered effective by supervisor.	2 - ID 4.24
Episode is effective.	2 - ID 4.43
Pat communicated competently.	3 - EC1.59
Chris communicated competently.	3 - EC1.63
Pat's actions considered effective by supervisor.	3 - EC1.63
Chris' actions considered effective by supervisor.	3 - EC1.59
Episode is effective.	3 - EC1.67
Pat communicated competently.	4 - ED1.87
Chris communicated competently.	4 - ED1.76
Pat's actions considered effective by supervisor.	4 - ED1.78
Chris' actions considered effective by supervisor.	4 - ED1.76
Episode is effective.	4 - ED1.93

Subgroup differences. Variance on several questions which evaluated actor competence were related to age differences. Episode 2, ID, was considered ineffective but contained some rules which were met with dissensus. In the scenario, the supervisor mentioned the subordinate's personal commitments and included a comment from a co-worker. Chris, the clerical worker, reacted defensively and the session ended abruptly and unpleasantly. In this episode, older respondents judged the clerical worker more harshly on two questions. First, 50% of those over 45 strongly disagreed that "Chris' actions would be considered effective by his/her superiors." On this same question, 30% of the other subgroups strongly disagreed,

representing a significant difference (Chi Square = 63.01; p = .000). Second, significantly more of those over 45 strongly disagreed that "Chris communicated in a very competent manner" (Chi Square = 21.47; p = .044).

These differences seemed to indicate that those who were older and had had more experience with the system, responded to Chris' defensiveness more harshly. This age group represented a slightly higher percentage of supervisors. The supervisors mentioned employee defensiveness during the interview process and, in turn, they did not mention the type of inappropriate supervisory comments that the subordinates did. The supervisors may have felt that the manager's comments were not entirely inappropriate and that, instead, the clerical worker's negative reactions were more inappropriate.

Worth noting is the fact that both subgroup differences emerged in a dissensus episodes. Those episodes which reflected dissensus contained several rule enactments which were not considered effective by the majority of the organization members. Therefore, the results from the dissensus episodes could be expected to confound the results from the consensus episodes.

On the other hand, the two consensus episodes, 1 (IC) and 3 (EC), showed a high degree of congruence among subgroups. Over 94% of the subjects either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the supervisor was communicating competently in the ineffective episode, and agreed or strongly agreed in the effective episode. For the subordinate, 57% of the subjects disagreed or strongly disagreed with a judgment of

communication competence in the ineffective episode. The judgment of overall episode effectiveness gained agreement from nearly 100% of the survey sample.

Summary

The results from the data analysis solidly validated this method of gathering information about a particular organizational culture and the relative rule knowledge of the members in the context of that culture. Notably, the clerical employees and their managers agreed on several fundamental rules for the appraisal interview. That is, there appeared to be a shared foundation across these two groups. Several observations about the nature of these rules can be made.

First, the rules for both the ineffective and effective interview reside primarily in the manager's behavior. The structured nature of the appraisal interview in this organization is probably responsible for this fact. The manager is generally responsible for scheduling the interview as well as setting the agenda. The manager would logically be held responsible for initiating the majority of the discussion in such a context. Thus, given this context, the subordinate can most reasonably affect the outcome through his/her reactions to supervisory behaviors.

The areas of dissensus on rules came solely from the managers. They mentioned more aspects than the subordinates did. This result was not surprising, given two observations. First, this organization gave the supervisor the higher degree of control as the dyad proceeded through the performance appraisal process. That is, the supervisor was notified of the need for an appraisal. Then, he/she filled out the appraisal and had the subordinate sign it before a certain date. The supervisor was

clearly in charge of this process. Second, the supervisors take part in a significantly greater number of interviews per year than the subordinates do. They could be expected to have more experience with the interview and, therefore, have more explicit understandings.

The most potentially harmful disagreement between the two groups was the difference in the stated purpose of the appraisal session. The clerical employees saw the session as a chance to get performance feedback from their bosses. Their supervisors enlarged the purpose of the session to include mutual goal setting through employee participation. Thus, the results mirror the concern in the literature with the split roles for the supervisor in performance appraisal (Meyer, et al., 1965). One group emphasized the evaluator or judge role for the supervisor while the other group recognized that role and also included the coach or mentor role.

The aggregate interview data gave a richness to the survey that made it a more realistic stimulus from which to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was found to be valid since the episodes were deemed to be realistic, varied significantly across type of episode, and produced the expected differential valence between the effective and ineffective episodes. As a group, then, the organization members were consistent with their knowledge of the basic appraisal interview rules which were identified through the interviews, as evidenced by the validation of the survey scenarios. The aggregated responses were similar, and any differences were slight.

Variance among subgroups within the organization was measured using various demographic qualities such as: age groups, positions, and years of experience. Very

few significant subgroup differences were detected. The greatest number of differences among subgroups appears in the episodes where dissensus was noted. These results confirmed the contention that different subgroups have slightly differential understandings of the rule structure. Those that were reported were due to differences in age or position. Both of these plausible explanations are consistent with a rules-based model of the appraisal interview. Since rule knowledge is gained through experience within each particular organization culture through interpersonal interactions, different subgroups would be expected to experience the culture in slightly different ways. However, their overall experience would be more similar than different. These expectations were supported.

Implications

The intent of this descriptive analysis was to come to an understanding of the rules for the performance appraisal interview in one organization. This methodology was effective in identifying rules for this episode as well as differential understandings among subgroups.

Although the particular definitions of effectiveness and ineffectiveness within the performance appraisal interview context in this organization cannot be generalized to other organizations, the importance of a contextual understanding of the interview has been supported. Through this type of rules analysis, the results of this study have suggested that training must focus not on specific trainable skills such as listening or focusing attention. The specific techniques of conducting an interview did not receive high priority positions in this analysis. Rather, the importance of a belief in and a

positive attitude toward the process were paramount. In terms of managerial actions, the results pointed toward a training emphasis on teaching more general interpersonal abilities such as perspective-taking.

A more specific approach to training could focus on facilitating the coorientation of supervisors and subordinates within a particular system. This study showed that a varied group of organization members, old, young, supervisors, subordinates, experienced, and inexperienced, agreed on a basic set of rules for the appraisal interview. These rules may be understood as expectations for this communication episode. As such, any interview that does not explicitly or implicitly meet the preexisting set of expectations may cause dissatisfaction from the participants. Thus, the mandate for personal directors would iie in uncovering the rules which are held by the organization members and making the implicit expectations more explicit.

A similar type of training, termed "frame-of-reference training," has been suggested as a method of reducing rater error (Borman, 1979; Bernardin, 1979). The program is designed to discover a normative work standard among work groups, identify idiosyncratic raters, and give those outliers frame-of-reference training. This procedure could also provide a vehicle for fostering communication between supervisor and subordinate regarding the salient properties associated with the performance appraisal interview. Since subordinate and supervisor agreement on rules of performance produces a more effective appraisal process (Eisenberg, Monge, and Farace. 1984). Agreement on the parameters of the feedback session could also be expected to improve the perceived effectiveness of the interview. Such a process

would seek to frame the context of the interview in terms of the various levels of the meaning hierarchy. The organization culture, the supervisor/subordinate relationship, and the individual life scripts of the individuals may all play a part in the assignment of meanings to certain behaviors.

Training specialists could benefit from an understanding of the importance of the context of the interaction. The respondents mentioned the interview behaviors in terms of an ongoing supervisor/subordinate relationship. Supervisors must be made aware of the primary importance of the nature of this relationship and its effect on various daily supervisor/subordinate episodes. Through such a process of exposure and discussion, a better working relationship between supervisor and subordinate could be achieved. Rules research recognizes the negotiation process which must occur in order for two people to coorientate their understandings of various episodes. Thus, an explicit accounting of the rules in any episode would allow for more open negotiation.

A rules methodology can provide a means of defining any episode of this type in an organization. Through this type of analysis, the organization members' interpretations and definitions are incorporated into the research process. This inclusion would allow the research to be more applicable to the needs of each specific organization and more representative of the daily behaviors of the organization members. A rules methodology, unlike the results of rules research (i.e. the lists of rules) is generalizable to many organizational contexts. Similar methods have been used to define productivity, promotion, and leadership. Additional applications are

virtually unlimited. An organization's social structure exists through the communication of its members. As such, a great deal of organizational life is guided by one or more sets of implicit rules for appropriate behavior. The process of explicating implicit rules opens up the expectations for critical review and allows all organization members to have the opportunity to understand not only the formally-written guidelines in the organization but also the shared implicit understandings.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. I would like you to think about a past performance review interview which you considered to be effective.

   A. How would you describe the situation?

   B. What did the supervisor or the employee say and/or do which you viewed as effective?

   C. What could the supervisor and/or the employee say during such a situation without hurting its effectiveness? Anything else?

   D. What would an employee/supervisor never say during such a situation without hurting its effectiveness?s

   E. What kind of statements should an employee/supervisor make to his/her supervisor/employee in such a situation?

2. I would like you to think about a past performance review interview which you considered to be ineffective.

   A. How would you describe the situation?

   B. What did the employee and/or the employee say and/or do which you viewed as ineffective?

   C. What could the supervisor and/or the employee say in such a situation?

   D. What would an employee and/or supervisor never say in such a situation?

   E. What kind of statements could an employee/supervisor make in such a situation?

3. I would like you to think of this university's ideally effective performance interview.

   A. What should be the situation?

   B. What types of behaviors should be exhibited by the employee and/or the supervisor which would enhance its effectiveness?

   C. What types of statements should be made by the employee and/or the supervisor?

   D. What types of statements should never be made by the employee and/or the supervisor?

   E. What types of statements should the employee/supervisor seek from the other party?

Appendix B

Episode Rules

Episode 1 - Effective Consensus

1. The appraisal is discussed with the employee.
2. The manager has given frequent feedback before the appraisal period.
3. The manager gives recognition and praise for areas of excellence.
4. The manager gives constructive criticism.
5. The manager solicits suggestions for improvement and comments about the appraisal from the employee.
6. The manager indicates possibilities which exist for expanding the clerical employee's job or for new opportunities.

Episode 2 - Effective Dissensus

1. The manager should use the instrument as a guide for the discussion but, should also include additional comments appropriate for the department or individual.
2. The manger and employee should engage in participative goal setting for the employee's development.
3. The employee should be able to discuss the manager's performance, noting strengths and weaknesses.

Episode 3 - Ineffective Consensus

1. The supervisor and subordinate both dread the process.
2. The manager does not put much effort or time into filling out the form.
3. THe form contains predominantly "satisfactory" ratings.
4. No explanation is given of the ratings.
5. The employee is shown the form and asked to sign it with only an obligatory query about questions he/she might have.

Episode 4 - Ineffective Dissensus

1. Discussion is only necessary when some problem is perceived.
2. Manager makes personal comments not related to the job.
3. Manager includes comments from other supervisors or employees.
4. Employee becomes defensive about problem areas. The employee gives excuses or will make no comment when asked about them.

Appendix C

Episode 1. Ineffective Consensus

Please read the following interview scenario and then complete the questions about it that follow on the next two pages.

Pat, is a supervisor at UNI. Pat has not enjoyed the performance appraisal process. Pat wondered what the purpose of the appraisal was and considered it a waste of valuable time. Pat has completed an appraisal form for Chris, a clerical employee at UNI. Although Chris completed an important project in the spring, Pat gave no feedback to Chris. Chris has not had good experiences with the performance appraisal interview in the past. The review held last year was a particularly unpleasant experience.

Pat: (At Chris' desk)
I just finished your yearly performance appraisal. Come in to my office so you can look at it and sign it. I have to get it back to Personnel because they want it today.

Chris: (Following Pat into the supervisor's office)
Okay, but I'm pretty busy today.

Pat: This shouldn't take long. I don't see anything wrong with your performance. Everything has been satisfactory. Here's the evaluation. What's your reaction?

Chris: (Looks over the form for a few minutes, noticing the hastily-made check marks. No comments are written in the space provided. Christ wants to ask Pat to explain the ratings. Christ looks at Pat, waiting for the discussion to begin. Pat is reading a memo and is not looking at Christ.)

Pat: (Looking up.)
Well, if you don't have any comments, please sign it next to my signature on the bottom of the form.
(Pat indicates the line for Chris' signature.)

Chris: (Signs and signs the form.)

Pat: (Standing up) Well, that's all I have.

Chris: Thank you.
(Abruptly leaving the supervisor's office.)

Appendix C

Episode 2. Ineffective Dissensus

Please read the following interview scenario and then complete the questions about it that follow on the next two pages.

Pat, a supervisor at UNI, has just completed the yearly performance appraisal on Chris, a clerical employee at UNI. Since some problems have been noted, Pat decides to discuss them with Chris. Chris feels sure Pat will include only critical comments.

Pat: I've completed your yearly performance appraisal and there are a couple of things I think we would discuss.

Chris: (Sits back in the chair, tight-lipped.)

Pat: (Hands the appraisal form to Chris.)
Take a few minutes to look this over. Then, we'll discuss a couple of the items.

Chris: (Notices that most of the checks are in the "satisfactory" column, but two areas are rated "unsatisfactory.")
Why did you give me an unsatisfactory in cooperation? I get along with the other people in this office just fine and I have for years.

Pat: Well, some of other clerical works say you don't offer to help when your work gets done. We have to work as a team here, and any help you can give to the others would help us be more efficient as a group.\

Chris: It's not my problem if others can't get their work done as quickly as I can. When I have extra time, it's because I've worked hard, not because I'm spending my time talking to everybody, like some of the other employees do. Who told you that, anyway?

Pat: Chris, do you think if you devoted less time working with the PTA and spent more time outside the office with your co-workers, you'd get along better with the other clerical employees. When was the last time you invited one of your co-workers to lunch?

Chris: (Glaring at Pat)
I enjoy the people I meet at PTA better than some others I know. After all, I am the President of the PTA this year. I consider it an important position, and I take my responsibilities very seriously. Besides, I don't

Episode 2 (continued)

see what having lunch with my co-workers has to do with getting along at work!

Pat: Chris, you've got to work harder at getting along with the other clerical employees and offer to help them when they're busy. Now, let's move on to the second problem area.

Christ, I've noticed that you tend to use your typewriter more than the new word processing program. Do you understand how to use the new system?

Chris: I don't have the time to memorize a five hundred-page manual with pages and pages of secret codes just to be able to type a letter. My typewriter works just as well and is just as fast. I'm too busy keeping up with the work I already have to do.

Pat: Chris, I'm sure you'd see the advantage of this new program if you tried it. I'd be willing to give you release time to enroll in a seminar so that you could learn to use the word processor. In fact, there's one coming up next month. What do you think?

Chris: I really have a lot of work to do. Can I just sign the form and get back to my desk?

Pat: Fine. Sign here. Here's your copy.

Appendix C

Episode 3. Effective Consensus

Please read the following interview scenario and then complete the questions about it that follow on the next two pages.

Pat, a supervisor at UNI, has completed the appraisal form for Chris, a clerical employee at UNI. Pat has scheduled an appointment with Chris to discuss the appraisal. Pat and Chris talk to each other frequently and both have been comfortable with their working relationship.

Pat: (Handing Chris a copy of the appraisal.) Chris, take a couple of minutes to review the form I've filled out.

(After several minutes.) First, Chris, I'd like you to know how much we appreciate your hard work. I consider you to be an asset to this office and to the university. Specifically, your office skills are outstanding. You are always pleasant to visitors to our office and when answering the telephone. You should feel good about the quantity and quality of your work this year. How do you feel about the past year?

Chris: Things have been going pretty well over all.

Pat: Are there any particular problems we can work out?

Chris: Well, there is one thing. Some of us are unhappy with the way the work load is distributed.

Pat: I have noticed a few disagreements among the office staff regarding areas of responsibility. That is the reason for the lower rating in the area of cooperation. Perhaps we can work on this together. Do you have any suggestions in that area?

Chris: Well, after that last argument over who go to do which job, some of discussed the problem. We think you ought to assign each of us an equally difficult task at the beginning of each day.

Pat: That's a good suggestion. But, do you think that would strengthen the team feeling in the office? Is there anything that you individually could do to help solve this problem?

Chris: I find it difficult to work hard when I see others finished with their jobs early. I can't help but feel some resentment. I try to remember that

Episode 3 (continued)

some days I finish before others, but, it's still tough. We're all trying to offer help to each other but, it is difficult when so many different personalities and work styles have to be combined.

Pat: I can see this is a lot more complicated than I thought. Let's discuss this issue at next week's staff meeting. In the meantime, you and the other clerical employees can be thinking of some specific strategies we can incorporate into the office routine to resolve this issue.

Chris: That might work. I'll tell the others so we can all be thinking about solutions to the problem before the meeting with you.

Pat: Great idea. You know, Chris, you have some real leadership qualities. I'd like to see you take some courses or seminars in management that would help you to prepare for a promotion in the near future.

Chris: I think I'd really like that. I've also heard of several courses being offered in the Communications department. Could release time be arranged? Also, in the meantime, I'd like to know how I could get my present job upgraded.

Pat: Why don't you bring me a description of each of these courses, including meeting times, and we'll meet again to discuss which course or courses would fulfill your needs and fit into our schedule. And I'll arrange a conference with the employment coordinator so that you can learn about the classification system and the appeal process for merit employees.

Chris: Thank you. And, I'll have that information for you next week.

Pat: I'm looking forward to our meeting next week. I feel we got a good start at solving that problem today.

Appendix C

Episode 4. Effective Dissensus

Please read the following interview scenario and then complete the questions about it that follow on the next two pages.

Pat, a supervisor at UNI, has completed the appraisal form on Chris, a clerical employee at UNI. Pat and Chris have been working together for several years and have a good working relationship.

Pat: Chris, take a few minutes to review the form I have filled out. (After several minutes.) Do you have any questions or concerns?

Chris: No, everything looks pretty much like I expected.

Pat: Okay, good. Chris, what I'd like to turn our attention to is how you can develop in your position and continue to improve your performance. I would like you to think about personal goals you can set for improvement. Let's try to come up with several specific goals you will work on for the upcoming year. What areas seem most important to you?

Chris: Well, I would like to attend more seminars and training sessions this year.

Pat: Fine. Do you have any in mind?

Chris: Well, our association has its annual state meeting in Des Moines this year. Would it be possible to attend that?

Pat: I would like to see you attend that conference. I believe those state meetings can help keep you motivated at work. The state association seems to be very good at arranging high quality sessions on a wide variety of topics. We'll have to take a look at the budget and the work load. But, we'll see if that trip could be arranged.

Chris: That sounds fair.

Pat: Okay, I'll have to get back to you on that. In the meantime, are there any projects here in the office that need attention? Can we address some specific goals to any of those?

Episode 4 (continued)

Chris: I would like to get the data base cleaned up. We have a number of files we don't use that should be eliminated or put in a back-up file.

Pat: Yes, you're right. That would certainly make finding the files we do use much easier. Those are good suggestions. I would also suggest writing them down and keeping a copy handy. You could refer to the list periodically and check off those projects which are completed or goals you have met. One more thing, Chris. Is there anything that I, as your supervisor, am doing to make your job more difficult? Are there things I can do to enable you to work more productively?

Chris: Well, I really like getting feedback about how I'm doing my job. Maybe a little more often...

Pat: That's a good suggestion. Sometimes I get so busy, I just forget to express my appreciation.

Chris: And any problems, too.

Pat: Yes, if we can attack any problems as they come up, we should be able to solve them more easily. So, you're saying that we just need to sit down and talk more frequently. I'll certainly try to do that. Is there anything else?

Chris: I don't think so.

Pat: Fine. I'll put that on my list of goals. Thank you for being open. I need feedback, too. Well, I think we've accomplished a great deal today. Should we meet again, say, in two weeks, to discuss that state conference?

Chris: That would be fine. Thank you.

Appendix D

Survey Scalar Items

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree

D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I think Pat communicated in a very competent manner in this episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
2.	Chris very much desired this episode to occur because he/she expected effective results.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
3.	I think Pat's actions would be considered effective by his/her superiors.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
4.	I could predict with great certainty that Chris's actions would get the response they did.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
5.	I believe Chris's actions contributed to the effectiveness of the episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
6.	Pat could have performed different acts that would have been appropriate in this situation.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
7.	I could predict with great certainty that Pat's acts would get the response they did.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
8.	Pat very much desired this episode to occur because he/she expected effective results.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
		SA	A	N	D	SD

		SA	A	N	D	SD
9.	This is a highly effective interchange between Pat and Chris.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
10.	I think Chris's actions would be considered effective by his/her superiors.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
11.	Chris could have performed other acts that would have been appropriate in this situation.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
12.	I think that Chris communicated in a very competent manner in this episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
13.	I believe Pat's actions contributed to the effectiveness of this episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
14.	This episode would never happen at this university.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
15.	I am a type of person who could do what Pat did in this episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:
16.	I am a type of person who could do what Chris did in this episode.	:___	:___	:___	:___	:___:

SA A N D SD

Appendix E
Survey Demographic Items

1. Sex
   _____ Female
   _____ Male

2. Age
   _____ Under 25
   _____ 25-35
   _____ 35-45
   _____ Over 45

3. Years working at UNI
   _____ 0-5
   _____ 6-10
   _____ 11-15
   _____ 16-20
   _____ Over 20

4. Years working in present department
   _____ 0-5
   _____ 6-10
   _____ 11-15
   _____ 16-20
   _____ Over 20

5. Check the statement which describes your participation in the performance review process.

   _____ I supervise clerical performance reviews.

   _____ I am subject to a clerical performance reviews.

   _____ I supervise clerical performance reviews and am subject to a clerical performance review.

6. During the last five years, approximately how many performance appraisal interviews have you conducted and/or participated in? _____

7. I am generally satisfied with my previous performance reviews.

_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

8. I believe my previous performance appraisal interviews have been effective.

_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:	_____:
strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

Appendix F

Results of Friedman Two-Way Anova for Variation Across Episodes

QUESTION:		MEAN RANK - Episode 1	2	3	4	CHISQ	DF	SIG
1.	I think Pat communicated in a very competent manner in this episode.	3.84	2.75	1.60	1.81	102.18	3	.000
2.	Chris very much desired this episode to occur because he/she expected effective results.	3.29	3.46	1.60	1.65	99.76	3	.000
3.	I think Pat's actions would be considered effective by his/her superiors.	3.76	2.87	1.63	1.74	99.04	3	.000
4.	I could predict with great certainty that Chris' actions would get the response they did.	2.71	2.71	2.37	2.20	6.33	3	.097
5.	I believe Chris's actions contributed to the effectiveness of the episode.	3.08	3.30	1.87	1.75	62.64	3	.000
6.	Pat could have performed different acts that would have been appropriate in this situation.	1.46	2.21	3.31	3.02	67.25	3	.000

QUESTION:		MEAN RANK - Episode 1	2	3	4	CHISQ	DF	SIG
7.	I could predict with great certainty that Pat's acts would get the response they did.	2.14	2.88	2.42	2.56	9.26	3	.026
8.	Pat very much desired this episode to occur because he/she expected effective results.	3.61	2.77	1.75	1.87	73.40	3	.000
9.	This is a highly effective inter-change between Pat and Chris.	3.61	3.25	1.47	1.67	114.95	3	.000
10.	I think Chris's actions would be considered effective by his/her superiors.	3.40	3.46	1.51	1.63	112.53	3	.000
11.	Chris could have performed other acts that would have been appropriate in this situation.	1.76	1.77	3.43	3.03	70.61	3	.000
12.	I think that Chris communicated in a very competent manner in this episode.	3.52	3.43	1.48	1.57	121.50	3	.000
13.	I believe Pat's actions contributed to the effectiveness of this episode.	3.26	2.88	1.79	2.07	45.00	3	.000

QUESTION:		MEAN RANK - Episode 1	2	3	4	CHISQ	DF	SIG
14.	This episode would never happen at this university.	2.57	2.29	2.57	2.58	1.83	3	.609
15.	I am a type of person who could do what Pat did in this episode.	3.63	2.80	1.74	1.83	76.49	3	.000
16.	I am a type of person who could do what Chris did in this episode.	3.29	3.34	1.72	1.83	84.81	3	.000